

5.3

Commas

Use the **comma (,)** to:

- ▶ **Separate items in a series:** The manager spoke to Tim, Brian, Mike, and Rob.
- ▶ **Separate short, independent clauses in a series:** The pilots chatted, they looked at the map, they prepared to lift off, and they greeted the passengers.
- ▶ **Separate two or more adjectives preceding a noun:** The model is a tall, handsome man.
- ▶ **Separate independent clauses:** We wanted to stay on that road, but it was closed due to the accident.
- ▶ **After words such as *well, yes, no, and why* when they begin a sentence:** Yes, this is the correct answer.
- ▶ **After an introductory participle phrase:** Wanting to help the stranded motorist, Dad steered his car off the parkway.
- ▶ **After several consecutive introductory prepositional phrases:** In the middle of the night, that noise scared the youngsters.
- ▶ **After an introductory adverbial clause:** Because the rain is still falling, we will have to cancel the picnic.
- ▶ **Set off parenthetical expressions:** This type of machinery, in my opinion, is outdated.
- ▶ **Set off the salutation of a friendly letter and the closing of any type of letter:**
Dear Maria, Yours truly,
- ▶ **Set off items in dates and addresses:** My friend was born on July 21, 1978.
- ▶ **Set off names in direct address:** Greg, are you going to apply for summer work this year?
- ▶ **Set off nonessential clauses and nonessential participle phrases:** These doctors, who have been in the same practice for fifteen years, are going to be at my cousin's wedding.
- ▶ **Set off appositives and appositive phrases:** New Jersey, the Garden State, is where my uncle lives.
- ▶ There is no need to insert a comma before Jr. or Sr. as in Thomas Jones Jr. or Michael Gavigan Sr.



WRITING TIP Editors will tell you that one of the biggest problems that writers confront is how to use the comma correctly. If you study the comma rules in this lesson, pay attention to how professional writers use the comma, and consult a grammar book or an Internet source when you need to, you will fare well with commas.

5.3A

Why We Use Commas (Part One)

Commas are needed in the sentences in this activity for eight reasons:

- A. Separate items in a series
- B. Separate short independent clauses in a series
- C. Separate two or more adjectives preceding a noun
- D. Separate independent clauses
- E. After words such as *well*, *yes*, *no*, and *why* when they begin a sentence
- F. After an introductory participle phrase
- G. After several consecutive introductory prepositional phrases
- H. After an introductory adverbial clause

Read each sentence, and pay attention to the inserted commas. Then, on the line after the number, write the corresponding letter of the reason that the commas were inserted.

1. _____ Jenkins is a talented, articulate, versatile speaker.
2. _____ They shot baskets, they wrestled, they bowled, and finally they rested.
3. _____ The singers whom my parents enjoy are Elvis, Madonna, Stevie Wonder, Cher, and the Four Tops.
4. _____ No, my car is not parked behind the gymnasium.
5. _____ In the middle of the day in June, we decided to go to my uncle's vacation cabin on the lake.
6. _____ Since we drove so many miles yesterday, we plan to take it easy today.
7. _____ Stung by his supervisor's remarks, the electrician decided to call his union leader for advice.
8. _____ Designed by Frederick Olmstead, Central Park in New York City is an oasis in the concrete jungle.
9. _____ A vote was scheduled for December 3, and the citizens were eager to cast their ballots.

5.3A

Why We Use Commas (Part One) (*Continued*)

10. _____ We ordered three pizzas, two hero sandwiches, and four bottles of soda.
11. _____ Whenever I feel afraid, I take a deep breath.
12. _____ The teacher lectured, some students copied notes, and some others doodled.
13. _____ The athletic, motivated high school student set the state high jump record.
14. _____ The Three Stooges were Moe, Larry, and Curly.
15. _____ Yes, we have no bananas.
16. _____ By the stores in the middle of town, we spotted the celebrity.
17. _____ When you see your sister, tell her that we will meet tomorrow afternoon.
18. _____ Mrs. Maiori is a friendly, caring vice principal.
19. _____ We did enjoy the movies, and we were pleased with its thrilling ending.
20. _____ Today we will attempt to organize all these folders, and tomorrow we will start to call more volunteers.